

This snake was shot by the main road to Sath Tal from Bhim Tal in a thickly populated part. It was first seen by some small boys, who looked on at the gorging from a few yards away while others ran back to the village to call the headman with his gun. At no time did it show any signs of aggressiveness and allowed the man to come within five yards and shoot it.

BHIMTAL,

DIST. NAINI, U. P.,

A. ST. J. MACDONALD

14th August 1947

[The King Cobra is fond of water and takes to it readily. It has been met with at an altitude of 6,000 ft. in the Himalayas and Nilgiris.—EDS.]

22.—NOTES ON *THE FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIA*:
REPTILIA AND AMPHIBIA, by Malcolm A. Smith

Volume III Serpentes, 1943

Page 114. The range of John's Sand Boa : *Eryx johni johni*

This snake is common in the neighbourhood of Trichinopoly and Madras. Specimens, young and old, caught and bottled by me are to be found in the museum of St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly, and in the Loyola College Museum, Madras.

Page 415. The Common Krait : *Bungarus caeruleus*

I have a specimen five feet long, caught at Guindy near Madras. Four feet six inches specimens are not rare in the neighbourhood of Madras. Four feet specimens are common.

Page 429. It is stated that 'there is no marked difference in size between the sexes of Cobras.'

I once measured fifty cobras as they were brought to me day by day by my snake-catchers.

The biggest, a male, was 68 inches long.

Twenty-five were males, and twenty-five were females.

The average length of the twenty-five males was $57\frac{1}{2}$ inches ; of the females $54\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Page 489. Saw-scaled Viper or Phoorsa : *Echis carinata*

The range of the Phoorsa is stated to be 'the whole of India south of the Ganges, except Bengal'.

I spent three years—June 1944 to May 1947—at Ranchi on the Chota Nagpur plateau (1,500–2,000 feet high), a dry region with a hot weather temperature of 105° F. I questioned villagers and missionaries from outlying stations about the snakes found in their districts. Not one had ever seen or heard of a Phoorsa, or knew what it was. Some had mistaken the Cat Snake (*Dipsas*) for a Phoorsa. I lectured on snakes in a score of camps within a fifty mile range of Ranchi. Kraits, both the Common and the Banded, and Cobras, had been killed in the camps but the Phoorsa was quite unknown.

ON THE BREEDING OF THE INDIAN PYTHON: *Python molurus*

I have two tame pythons, known as Benjamin and Jacob, both females, their names notwithstanding. They were given their names fourteen years ago, when they were only a few days old, and once given, the names remained. Jacob was born (hatched out) on 22nd July 1933; Jacob on 24th July 1933. The eggs were laid by different mothers, both wild.

On 28th March 1938, I put a male python (tame) into their cage. On 4th April 1938, Benjamin and this male mated; I watched them, and took them in my arms. Jacob must have mated a few days earlier. On 4th June 1938, Jacob laid 21 eggs; on 31 June 1938, Benjamin laid 10 eggs. Both snakes began to incubate their eggs at once. They abandoned them on 28th June. Conditions for incubating were not favourable. So far all is normal.

Now comes a puzzle. On 9th June 1947, that is nine years after the mating, Benjamin laid sixteen eggs. Most of them were immature, hard, discoloured; five of them were perfect in shape and size and covering, and differed in nothing outwardly from perfect python eggs. On 1st August 1947, Benjamin laid one egg, immature, 7 inches in circumference round the centre, 9 inches round the ends. To my certain knowledge no male python has been in the cage since April 1938.

The Fauna of British India, Reptilia and Amphibia, Vol. III Serpentes, 1943, page 21, has a few remarks which may be a clue to the solution of the problem, and may suggest a line of investigation. 'Kopstein discovered that it was possible to have successive layings of fertile eggs without re-mating. An isolated female laid 4 eggs on 5th May 1934, and 4 more on 1st January 1935. American writers show that the spermatozoa can be retained in the uterus for several months.'

In the present instance the spermatozoa seem to have been retained for nine years.

LOYOLA COLLEGE,
CATHEDRAL P.O.
MADRAS.
31st August 1947.

REV. C. LEIGH, S.J.

[There is nothing to show that the eggs laid by python Benjamin nine years after mating were fertile. The laying of eggs by caged female birds (e.g. parrots) after many years of solitary confinement is well known. All eggs so laid are of course sterile. Might not this same phenomenon be applicable to reptiles believed to be the phylogenetic ancestors of birds? And why does the writer presume that the spermatozoa in this case may have been retained for nine years?—EDS.]

23.—NOTE ON THE BULL-FROG (*RANA TIGRINA*)
EVERTING LUNG

On the 10th June (1946), I caught a Bull-Frog. When handled, it inflated itself to capacity in the usual defensive way. The pulsation of the throat ceased, except for an occasional effort of 'swallow-